



## FROM THE DESK OF THE DDSN MEDICAL CONSULTANT

### *The "Right Stuff":*

- o The Right Medication*
- o The Right Person*
- o The Right Dose*
- o The Right Time*
- o The Right Method*
- o The Right Follow Up*
- o The Right Professional*

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## Our Roles in Giving Medication

We use teamwork to provide care for our consumers. This works best when all members of the team understand what is going on, what is planned, how to help and who has responsibility for each part of the plan. When medication is used, the health care provider (physician, PA or nurse practitioner) is responsible for the prescription, the pharmacy for dispensing the medication and the licensed or registered nurse for giving it to the consumer.

These notes look at the shared parts of the process so that we can all support the best care possible for our consumers.

In our care for persons with disabilities we aim to offer the best life possible with as much independence as possible. Because many of our consumers have health and medical problems, many of them use medication. As a care team, we need to be sure that these medications are necessary, that they are given correctly and that they do have the helpful effect we wish, and not cause problems.

Every medication has positive and negative effects. We decide to use them when we feel that the good is more important than the bad. For instance, if we have a blocked nose with a cold, we may consider using pseudoephedrine (Sudafed or other brands) because it usually helps the lining of the nose to shrink and

opens the nose so that we can breathe more easily. We need to know that people who have high blood pressure may have more trouble with their blood pressure than is wise if they use this medication. We may also find that the risk of becoming jumpy and not able to sleep is a side effect that means we should avoid using pseudoephedrine. We may or may not use this medication considering these facts. Deciding to use it meant that we considered the pros and cons we know about the medicine and about its effects.

Most of us can make these kinds of choices, then watch for the medication to clear our nose and check that it does not make us too jumpy. For many of our consumers, both these actions need teamwork involving the consumer, family, advocates, care team and the prescriber. The prescriber has the final responsibility for writing the order and therefore final decision, but we all contribute to the process. The consumer, as far as possible, needs to be able to choose. The care team helps the consumer with these decisions by providing knowledge and support. As the team knows the consumer they are able to assist in the follow-up as well.

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Once the decision is made to give medication, we need to make sure that we follow up and record its effect. The medication must be the right medication to the right person in the right dose at the right time by the right method. We can all take part in making sure this happens.

#### **The Right Medication:**

Check labels. Generic drugs can replace the brand name of the company that first made the drug. Generics are designed to act the same but may look different. If they look different, check before giving.

#### **The Right Person:**

All of us need to be sure that the correct person gets the right medication. If you are not sure, check "who is who" before giving.

#### **The Right Dose:**

We try to use the smallest dose that will work. Do not change dose without asking the doctor, or practitioner who wrote the order. If the person has an order that has adjustable doses, record the observations and give dose as adjusted in the order. For example, give insulin after blood sugar is recorded and dose adjusted. Record the degree of pain reported or the temperature recorded if giving acetaminophen (Tylenol) "as required for pain or fever".

#### **The Right Time:**

Many medications need to be given at a definite time. Some examples are:

- o Insulin of different types must be given at different times before/with/or after meal.
- o Anticonvulsant drugs often need to be timed for expected times of seizures.
- o Metoclopramide (Reglan) will work best if given just before meals.

Discuss problems of doing this with your prescribing clinician or doctor. They may be able to adjust times for some drugs.

#### **The Right Method:**

There are many ways of giving medication and different preparations now available. By mouth, tablets and capsules can be made to deliver medicine at different rates. Be careful that some capsules and coated tablets may not be safe to crush - check with the pharmacy. Liquids can be used and new disintegrating tablets may be helpful but are not available for many medications. Skin patches are also made for some drugs. The use of sprays, nebulizers or inhalers can be easier but they need to be watched to avoid under or over use.

If you find a good answer to the problem of giving a consumer a medication that they resist, record it, and tell others.

#### **The Right Follow-Up:**

The right follow up when our consumers are on medication is also important. We will help if we watch for the medications effect and any problems, record them and notify health professionals.

#### **The Right Professional:**

The prescribing and administration of medication in South Carolina are governed by state law. If in doubt about your authority to participate in such activities, check with your supervisor before proceeding.

If we all contribute in these ways, we can use medication in a safe way that will best help our consumers.

If ever in doubt, ask your health professionals before giving the medication.